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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

13 February 1951

SUBJECT: NIE-9: TURKEY'S POSITION IN THE EAST-WEST STRUGGLE  
(Redraft after consideration by IAC representatives)

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the will and ability of Turkey to maintain its alignment with the West, and the courses of action Turkey might follow in the event of war.

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CONCLUSIONS

1. Turkey is determined to resist Soviet expansion. It is solidly aligned with the West because this alignment offers Turkey its only hope of effectively resisting Soviet pressures. At present the primary objective of Turkish foreign policy is to secure continued US assistance and, if possible, a clear-cut US commitment to come to Turkey's defense in the event of an attack.

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2. New Soviet or Soviet-Satellite successes in expanding the Communist sphere of control outside the Near East would not significantly affect Turkey's pro-US alignment as long as the US demonstrated that its fundamental aim was to continue the struggle against the USSR. A shift in US policy to one of hemispheric defense would, almost by definition, oblige Turkey to abandon its pro-US alignment.

3. Turkey would probably not alter its alignment with the West even if its land communications with the Western Powers were virtually cut off by Soviet conquest or absorption of Iran, Iraq, and Syria. In this event, Turkey would probably be obliged to adopt a more cautious policy toward the USSR but would almost certainly not grant the USSR territorial concessions or embark on a policy of general appeasement.

4. If, after Soviet occupation of Iran, Iraq, and Syria, the US failed to oppose militarily Satellite occupation of Greece or refused to consider a Soviet attack on Greece sufficient justification for a US declaration of war against the USSR, Turkey's attitude would depend on broader strategic considerations. If the US left no doubt of its determination to oppose the USSR globally and to support and supply Turkey to the utmost of its ability, Turkey would probably still

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maintain its pro-US alignment. If, on the other hand, Turkey were unable to obtain assurances of such support, Turkey would probably attempt to adopt a neutralist policy.

5. We believe that Turkey is capable of halting at the Straits an invasion by Bulgarian forces. Against a Soviet attack, the Turks could probably maintain organized resistance for two or three months and -- with substantial Western assistance -- could hold for some time a redoubt area in Southern Turkey against Soviet forces.

6. Turkey will continue to support, to the extent of its capabilities, concerted Western action under UN auspices in opposition to Soviet or Satellite aggression elsewhere.

7. We estimate that under any circumstances Turkey will resist aggression against itself.

8. In the event of general war, Turkey, if not itself attacked, probably would initially maintain a non-belligerent status but would do everything compatible with that status to facilitate a Western victory.

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## DISCUSSION

### THE SOLIDITY OF TURKEY'S PRO-WESTERN ALIGNMENT

1. Turkey is determined to resist Soviet expansion.

Short of a US retreat into hemispheric isolationism, and as long as it is not completely cut off from Western aid, Turkey will remain solidly aligned with the West. The Turks are determined to preserve their independence and consider that alignment with the US and its allies offers Turkey its only hope of effectively resisting Soviet pressures, which since the end of World War II have been unremitting. In 1946 the USSR demanded a share in control of the Straits and the right to station Soviet troops there. It has unofficially claimed the Kars plateau area in northeastern Turkey. Moreover, the USSR has permitted its propagandists to denounce the Turkish regime, vilify Turkish leaders, attack Turkey's close association with the US, and attempt to incite revolt against the Turkish Government.

2. The Turks have stood firm against Soviet and Satellite pressure. They have avoided hasty or provocative actions against the USSR, and have indicated a willingness to discuss points at issue with the USSR. At the same time, however,

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they have made it clear that they are strongly averse to a policy of appeasement and are determined to resist any Soviet attempts to encroach on Turkey's independence or territorial integrity. Moreover, they have sought to ally themselves with the power or combination of powers most capable of resisting the USSR.

3. At present the primary objective of Turkey's foreign policy is to obtain a US commitment to come to Turkey's defense in event of a Soviet or Soviet-Satellite attack. Pronouncements of US interest in Turkey's security and the extension of US military and economic assistance have given the Turks a large measure of assurance, but they are still deeply concerned by the lack of a formal guarantee of prompt and effective aid in the event of war. The Turks would almost certainly provide base facilities to the US in return for a definite US commitment to come to Turkey's defense. Having failed to obtain a firm US commitment to date, the Turks have sought to obtain indirect US guarantees by seeking membership in NATO or by advocating an Eastern Mediterranean security pact with direct US participation. To the Turks, limited association with the NATO for Mediterranean defense planning represents only a slight improvement over their previous situation. They consider that the formation of a Mediterranean bloc without US

participation or the conclusion of mutual assistance agreements with their neighbors without a US guarantee might actually be disadvantageous and they have, therefore, firmly opposed them. While they have reaffirmed their adherence to the 1939 Tripartite Treaty of mutual assistance with France and the UK, they clearly value it less as a direct guarantee of British and French assistance than as potentially an indirect way of getting US assistance. Turkey's participation in the UN is animated to some extent by the same motives. Turkey is more willing than most members to make the UN effective but has little confidence in its present effectiveness to check Soviet aggression.

#### POSSIBILITIES OF A SHIFT IN TURKEY'S ALIGNMENT

4. The Turks expect the West to suffer further diplomatic or military reverses but believe that the US and its allies will be able ultimately to contain Soviet imperialism or defeat the USSR in event of war. A reduction in the US power position as a result of further reverses in the cold war would not alter Turkey's basic alignment as long as the US continued to oppose Soviet imperialism. Even if its land communications with the West were virtually cut off by Soviet conquest or absorption of Iran, Iraq, and

Syria, Turkey would probably not alter its alignment with the West. In this event, Turkey would be obliged to adopt a more cautious policy toward the USSR. A number of individuals not unacceptable to the USSR might be brought into the government, and internal security measures would be tightened. It is unlikely, however, that Turkey would agree to territorial concessions, request the US military mission to leave Turkey, or otherwise appease the USSR.

5. If, after Soviet occupation of Iran, Iraq, and Syria, the US failed to oppose militarily Satellite occupation of Greece or refused to consider a Soviet attack on Greece as sufficient justification for US declaration of war against the USSR, Turkey's attitude would depend on broader strategic considerations. These considerations would include: (a) the degree of military preparedness in Western Europe; (b) Western military strength in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean; (c) the attitude of the US toward Turkey and US strategic plans concerning Turkey; and (d) the attitude of the Western Powers in general and of the US in particular toward Soviet aggression. We believe, however, that Turkey would probably maintain its pro-US alignment, provided the US left no doubt of its determination to oppose the USSR globally and to support and supply Turkey to the utmost of its ability. If Turkey were

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unable to obtain assurances of such support, it would probably attempt to adopt a neutralist policy.

6. Virtually the only circumstance which would cause Turkey automatically to abandon its pro-US alignment would be the adoption by the US of a policy of hemispheric defense. Almost by definition, such a development would force Turkey to revise its foreign policy. However, even if Turkey were isolated from the West in this way, the Turks would continue to resist Soviet pressure. In time, a body of opinion favoring appeasement and accommodation with the USSR would probably grow up and might eventually dominate Turkish policy, but at present it appears more likely that the Turks would — if necessary — fight for their independence, no matter how suicidal such a course might be.

#### THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF TURKEY'S POSITION

7. Turkey is one of the strongest anti-Communist countries on the periphery of the USSR and the only one in the Near East capable of offering substantial resistance to Soviet aggression.

(a) Turkey's strength derives to a considerable extent from the national unity and homogeneity of its

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population. In spite of Turkey's low standard of living and occasional bitter controversy over internal issues, the great majority of the Turkish people are united in their opposition to the USSR and fully support the government's policy of aligning Turkey with the Western Powers. Elements of the Kurdish, Greek, and Armenian minorities and even some Turks might be susceptible to Communist subversion if internal security broke down, but such a development is likely to occur only as a result of a Soviet invasion. Turkey's political institutions and relatively free press constitute sufficient outlets for what little disaffection exists, and subversion is effectively controlled by the Turkish security services. At the same time the extension of democratic procedures is building a stronger base for Turkish national power.

(b) Another major source of Turkish strength is its army. With US aid the Turkish Army has recently developed into a compact, modern force of about 280,000 men. It has a theoretical mobilization potential of 1,500,000 men, although it could not equip or provide logistic support for this number. While the full-scale reorganization of Turkey's defense establishment envisaged in the US military aid program is not yet completed, the combat effectiveness of the armed forces

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has already increased considerably despite the temporary dislocations inherent in converting from old to new methods, weapons, and equipment.

8. Turkey's position is weak in the following respects:

(a) Despite major improvements made possible by the US military and economic aid programs, the Turkish armed forces have inadequate supply services, are critically short of technically qualified NCO's, and still lack an effective air force.

(b) Turkey's economy is unable to support a heavy defense burden. Because the economy is largely agricultural, Turkey is heavily dependent on outside supplies both for consumer goods and military materiel. The necessity of maintaining large defense forces is a strain on Turkey's resources. Because of the lack of industrial development, the number of trained mechanics is limited.

(c) Turkey is particularly exposed to Soviet pressure because of its geographical position. It is located on the Soviet periphery, far from Western centers of strength, and flanked on the east and south by weak

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and unstable countries that are themselves highly vulnerable to Soviet aggression. Large Soviet and/or Satellite forces could be hurled against Turkey with little or no warning. Because the avenues of Soviet/Satellite land attack from the Balkans and the Caucasus are widely separated, Turkey would, in the event of war, be obliged to divide its limited forces and fight on two fronts without good interconnecting transportation facilities.

9. Despite the shortcomings of its armed forces, its economic weaknesses, and its geographical vulnerability, Turkey is capable of putting up considerable resistance to Satellite or Soviet aggression. We believe it is capable of halting at the Straits and possibly even at the prepared defenses in eastern Thrace an invasion by Bulgarian forces. Against a Soviet attack, Turkey is believed capable of delaying Soviet advances into the interior of the country by stubborn defensive fighting. The Turkish armed forces could probably maintain some form of organized resistance for two or three months. A redoubt area in southern Turkey could be held for some time if the Turks received substantial assistance from the Western Powers. In any event, with outside support the Turks could probably maintain guerrilla warfare against Soviet lines of communication in Turkey.

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STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF TURKEY

10. The alignment of Turkey with the West is of primary strategic importance to the US because of Turkey's political and military strength and its geographical position. Turkey adjoins Soviet and Soviet Satellite territories and lies across one line of Soviet penetration into the weak and unstable countries of the Middle East. The Turkish Army would be a major obstacle to Soviet advances in the Middle East through Turkey. Furthermore, Turkey's pro-US alignment, in conjunction with its military strength, deters the USSR from attacking Turkey, because implicit in that alignment is the possibility that an assault on Turkey might lead the US to attack the USSR.

11. In the event of general war, Turkey might become a forward air base for US air forces, although construction of air facilities and their protection from Soviet air and ground attacks would be necessary before the US could use Turkey effectively as a base for air operations against the USSR and its Satellites. At present, Turkey is extremely vulnerable to air attack, and its air facilities are incapable of supporting medium bomber operations or sustaining fighter or light bomber operations. However, the US is currently engaged in reconstructing old and building new Turkish air facilities, a program which should result in considerable improvement within one year.

12. As long as Turkey controls the Straits, Turkey might be able to prevent the passage of Soviet submarines and surface ships from the Black Sea through the Straits to the Mediterranean.

13. In the unlikely event that Turkey should abandon its pro-US alignment, the effect on US interests in the Near East would be extremely serious. There is little doubt that pro-Western elements, who now hold a precarious balance of influence in most of the adjacent countries, would be seriously demoralized and their influence weakened if Turkey abandoned its present alignment.

PROBABLE TURKISH COURSES OF ACTION IN THE EVENT OF WAR

14. We believe Turkey will stubbornly resist any aggression upon its territory whether or not outside assistance is forthcoming. In case of attack, Turkey will almost certainly appeal to the US for military assistance, to the UK and France for aid under the tripartite treaty of 1939, and to the UN for such support as it can give.

15. In the event of a Satellite or Soviet attack against Yugoslavia, Iran, or even Greece, Turkey would not on its own intervene militarily. It would increase its frontier security and make every effort to avoid provoking a Soviet attack. If

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the UN or the US requested the use of Turkish bases from which to institute countermeasures, Turkey would probably comply if it received a definite US commitment of aid in the event of an attack on Turkey. In the event of further Soviet or Satellite attacks in other parts of Europe and Asia, Turkey would support UN collective security measures, short of commitment of Turkish troops, but would oppose large-scale expenditure of Western resources in "police" measures against the Soviet Satellites which would reduce Western potentialities against the USSR itself.

16. If the Korean conflict should lead to full-scale war between the US and Communist China, the Turkish reaction would be ambivalent. On the one hand, Turkey would be impelled to support action against the Chinese Communists by its conviction that all nations threatened by Soviet imperialism must stand together and by its desire to demonstrate fully to the US its reliability as an ally. On the other hand, the Turks would become increasingly concerned with their own situation vis-a-vis the USSR and would view unfavorably any greater commitment of US military strength in the Far East, unless such commitment were matched or even exceeded by expansion of US strength in the Eastern Mediterranean and accompanied by US guarantees to Turkey. The line of action actually adopted by Turkey would be determined largely by the

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Turkish Government's estimate of its security position at the moment. Turkey would, however, give diplomatic support to the US and might continue to provide the services of the Turkish Brigade.

17. In the event of a general war in which Turkey itself was not attacked, the Turks probably would initially adopt a non-belligerent status. Nevertheless, Turkish political leaders, both government and opposition, have frequently expressed the view that Turkish neutrality in the East-West struggle in war or peace is neither advisable nor possible. Consequently, even though Turkey were not attacked, the Turks would cooperate with the West and do everything compatible with a non-belligerent status to facilitate a Western victory.